

Monthly Obstetric Meetings

SINCE 1946 a meeting has been held monthly in the Royal Maternity Hospital, Belfast, during the months September to June. It has been attended by the staff of both maternity hospitals and by representatives from the Department of Pathology, the Ministry of Health, and the City Borough Health Department. At this meeting the monthly statistical reports for the Jubilee Maternity Hospital and the Royal Maternity Hospital have been presented and discussed. Maternal and foetal mortality have been reviewed—an obstetric or pædiatric paper has been read and followed by a general discussion.

A meeting was held on Wednesday, 18th January, Mr. T. S. S. Holmes taking the chair.

Dr. A. T. Elder read a paper entitled "Preventive Medicine and the Practice of Obstetrics." He traced the history of preventive medicine in obstetrics, giving a detailed review of the literature and considered that the present favourable position was due to co-operation of obstetricians, bacteriologists, and the public health authorities. Ante-natal supervision should be performed by officers with resident obstetric experience and a senior consultant should be available at clinics for the examination of difficult cases. Bed spacing in maternity hospitals was of importance and isolation blocks must be available for infected cases. Dust-free ventilation was necessary and staff, patients, and equipment should be subjected to bacteriological control. Infection should be notified promptly to the health authorities, and the speaker emphasised the importance of co-operation in this respect.

A meeting was held on Wednesday, 19th February, Mr. T. S. S. Holmes taking the chair. Dr. T. M. Roulston read a paper entitled "Cæsarean Section."

He reviewed 646 cases of cæsarean section performed in the Royal Maternity Hospital, Belfast, in the years 1943-1947. The section rate was 8.9 per cent. This high figure was due to the number of abnormal cases referred to the hospital, the number of repeat sections, and the high incidence of primigravidæ treated. The indication in 67 per cent. of cases was cephalo-pelvic disproportion, and placenta prævia accounted for 8.5 per cent. Although vaginal delivery following a previous section was achieved now in an increasing number of cases, repeat sections accounted for 32 per cent. of series. Elective sections were performed in 28 per cent. cases, and the remainder (40 per cent.) were performed in patients in labour. The maternal mortality was 1.43 per cent. and the foetal mortality 5.7 per cent. The speaker emphasised that all the deaths occurred in patients who had had a section performed in labour. He discussed possible ways in which both maternal and foetal mortality could be reduced.

A meeting was held on Friday, 8th April, Mr. T. S. S. Holmes taking the chair. It was attended by the members of the Women's Gynæcological Visiting Club, this concluding their two-day visit to the Belfast hospitals.

Professor C. H. G. Macafee presented the latest figures for the treatment of placenta prævia in the Royal Maternity Hospital and in private practice. During the years 1937-1949 there were 275 cases. There were two maternal deaths, a mortality rate of 0.73 per cent. The foetal mortality was 20.4 per cent., and, if deaths from foetal abnormalities were excluded, the corrected figure was 17.1 per cent. These figures were compared with those of the Royal Maternity Hospital in 1932-1936. In these years there were seventy-six cases, with a maternal mortality of 2.6 per cent. and a foetal mortality of 51.3 per cent. The speaker considered that the results vindicated the use of conservative treatment in placenta prævia. Prematurity, with its associated foetal mortality, had been reduced without increasing the maternal risk. He emphasised, however, that conservative treatment must be employed intelligently and that each case required consideration by a senior obstetrician.

Dr. A. S. Majury read a paper entitled "Pregnancy Complicated by Diabetes Mellitus." He reviewed fifty-four pregnancies occurring in thirty-nine diabetic patients in the Royal Maternity Hospital during 1938-1948. This represented an incidence of 1 in 313 pregnancies. Hydramnios occurred in 26 per cent. of the cases, while pre-eclamptic toxæmia occurred in 52 per cent. Coma and eclampsia were the principal hazards for the diabetic mother and caused three deaths, a mortality of 5.5 per cent. In spite of insulin therapy, the foetal mortality remained high, being 42.6 per cent. The speaker reviewed the possible causes, namely, ketosis and toxæmia in the mother, dystocia, with birth injury, and maternal hormonal imbalance. He considered that, as suggested by Priscilla White, oestrogen and progesterone deficiency might be the most important factor, although no patient in the series received oestrogen and progesterone therapy. He found that cæsarean section was performed nineteen times, resulting in a healthy child on eighteen occasions, and made a plea for more frequent use of this method of delivery in diabetic patients.

REVIEW

PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDICINE. By Curran and Guttman. Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd. 10s. 6d.

THE third edition of this book has retained the general characteristics of its predecessors. Despite the strong desire of the authors that this book should not grow in size, it has been necessary to expand it owing to the rapid advances made in psychiatry in the past few years.

The chapter on treatment has been re-written and brought up to date, but it has been confined wisely to a brief outline of the various methods in use, as detailed technique can be obtained from special articles devoted to these methods. More space has been allotted to obsessional states and hysterical reactions, with a fuller account of treatment of these difficult and refractory disorders. The chapter on Psychiatric Aspects of Head Injury is concise and clear, with a full understanding of the difficulties arising in the diagnosis and treatment of the various syndromes brought about by trauma.

Altogether, this book is an excellent introduction to psychological medicine, written from a clinical point of view, and is a most suitable text-book for medical students and for medical practitioners interested in psychiatry.

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